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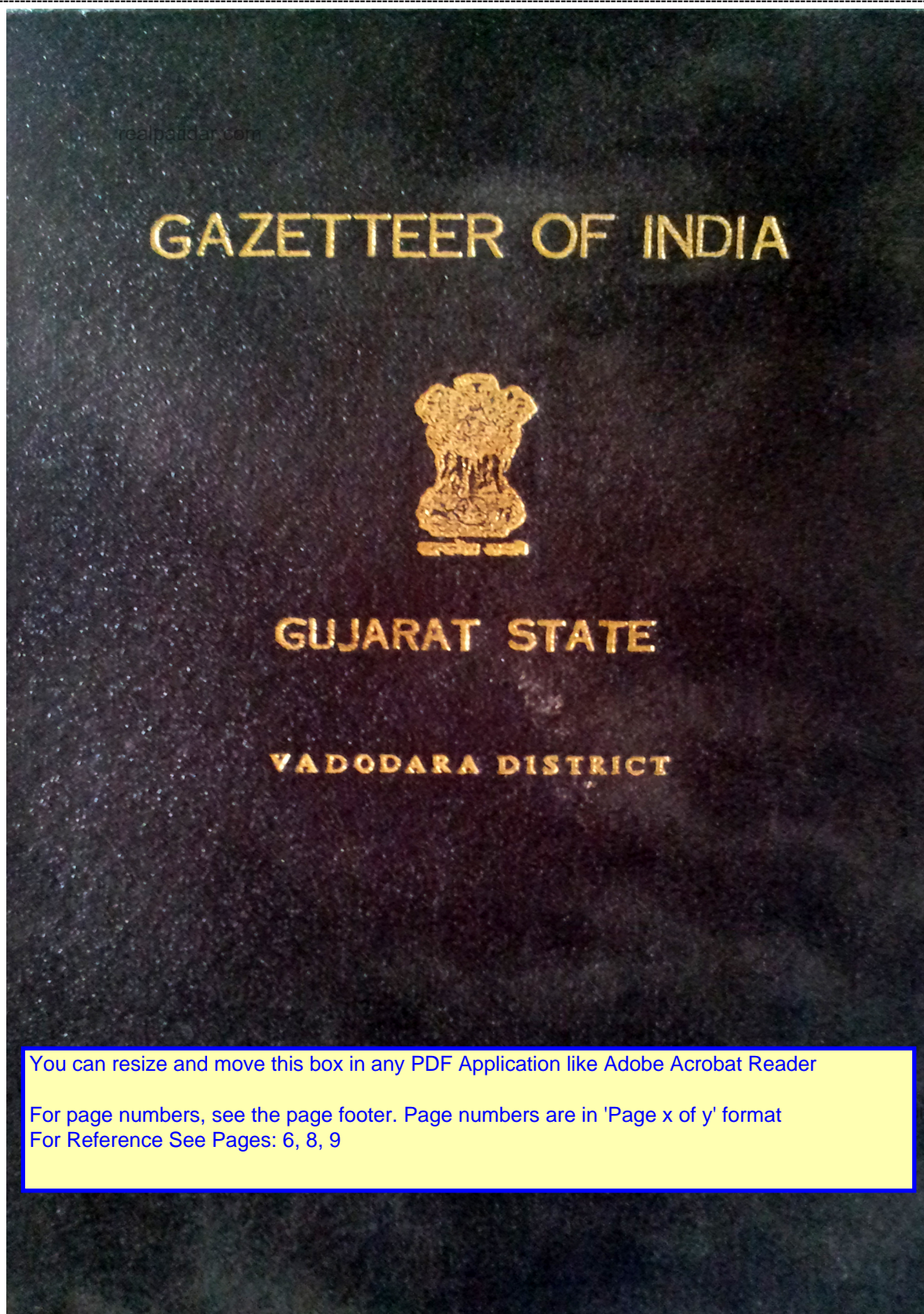
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# **VADODARA DISTRICT GAZETTEER**

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# GUJARAT STATE GAZETTEERS



Government of Gujarat

## VADODARA DISTRICT

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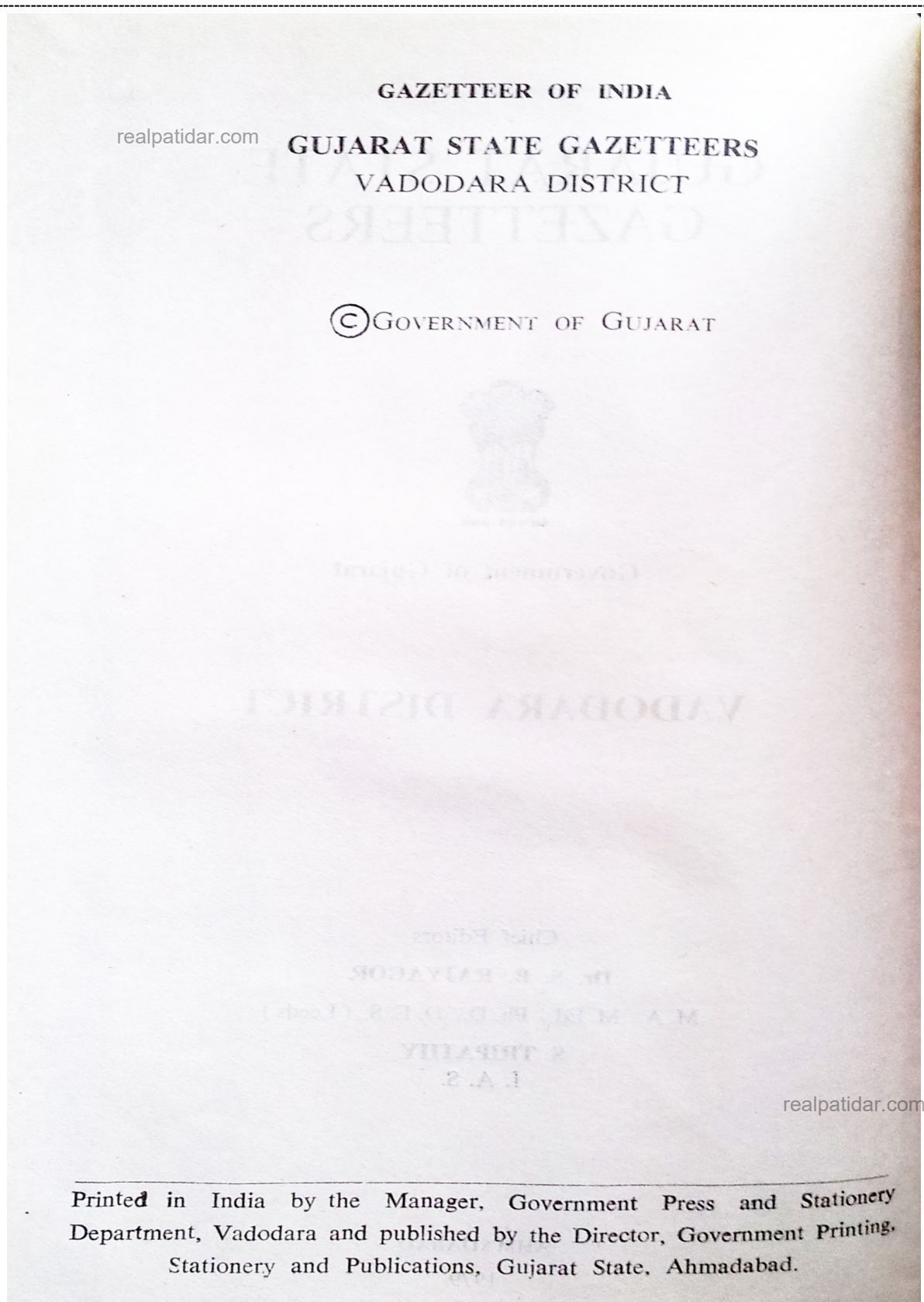
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to Kachhh, Kathiawad and Gujarat. They are Vaishnavas of Vallabhachari and Ramanuji sects. Their family goddess is Randal Mata, and they are devout worshippers of Darya Pir, the spirit of the Indus, who is said to have saved them when they fled from Multan. They wear the sacred thread and allow widow marriage.

#### CULTIVATORS

Among cultivators the Patel, Kachhia, and Mali are found in this district. Patels are divided into two sub-divisions Leva and Kadva. In this district Leva Patels are mainly found. Gujarati Patels claim to be of Kshatriya stock. They are Gujjars and came from Punjab. The Kachhia is a caste of market growers, from *katchha*, a vegetable garden. They are said to be originally Kanbi or Koli cultivators who took to the growing of garden produce and formed a separate caste. In addition to growing garden produce, Kachhias are also bricklayers, handloom weavers, carpenters, sawyers, shop-keepers and are also employed in Government and private services. In religion, they are Bijpanthi, Swaminarayan or Vallabhachari. Among their sub-castes, the Andharia and Khatri Kachhias are like the Matia Kanbis, followers of Imam Shah and observe half-Hindu, half Mahomedan rites. They fast on Ramzan and visit Pirana (district Ahmadabad). Marriage ceremonies do not differ from those of Hindus in general. Widow marriage and divorce are allowed. Like Hindus the dead are burnt and *shraddha* ceremonies are performed. The Mali is a caste of gardeners. They are gardeners and flower sellers. They are vegetarians. In religion, they are Kabirpanthi, Ramanuji, Vallabhachari, Swaminarayan and some of them are also Jains. Their birth, marriage, and death customs do not differ from those of Hindus. Widows are allowed to remarry. Levirate is a common practice among them. Divorce is granted. The Matia is a caste of Kanbis. They were originally Lewa Kanbis, who came to be called Matia, because they followed the Mat or doctrine of the Pir. They thus acquired many Muslim customs and observances and had to separate from the Lewa Kanbis. They are strict vegetarians. They follow the Atharva Veda and call themselves Satpanthi. They worship the tombs of Muslim saints whose mausoleums are at Pirana, Navsari, Ahmadabad and Burhanpur. Their sacred book is a collection of religious precepts called *Shikshapatri* made by Imamshah, the saint of Pirana. Some of them learn this book by heart and are called Kaka or devotee. A family of the Kakas officiates at a temple at Kukas in the Sinor taluka. Matias have three religious divisions; Panchia or followers of Surabhai's mausoleum, originally managed by five devotees; Satia or followers of Baba Mahomed's mausoleum, originally managed by seven devotees; and Athia or followers of Bakr Ali's mausoleum, originally managed by eight devotees. Except in being devotees of these different saints, these divisions do not differ in belief or in practice. Matias keep Ramzan



fast and observe as holiday the Uras or saint's day. Besides Muslim holidays, they observe as days of fasting, Holi, Akhatrij, Divaso, Belev and Divali. Their chief places of pilgrimage are Navsari, Vemar, Pirana and Burhanpur. Widow marriage is allowed. Divorce is lawful. They bury their dead. From 1880 there has been a split among the Matias. Through the preaching of an ascetic called Nirmaldas, who told them of their Lewa Kanbi origin, some families calling themselves Vaishnava Matias formed themselves into a separate caste as distinguished from the Pirana Matias. The seceding or Vaishnava Matias have joined the Ramanandi and Dadupanthi sects. They worship images of Ranchhodji or Dwarkanathji and go on pilgrimage to Banaras, Mathura, etc. The Vaishnava Matias have abandoned all Muslim customs, call Brahmans to officiate on marriage and other occasions and in all respects live like Lewa Kanbis.

#### *Bharwad and Rabari*

Among herdsmen the Bharwad and the Rabari castes are generally found in this district. They have migrated from Central Asia though they claim Gokul Brindavan to be their original home. Krishna's foster-father Nand Meher belonged to this caste. From Gokul, they are said to have moved to Mewad, and from Mewad they have spread into Gujarat. They sell goat and ewes' milk and weave and sell woollen blankets. Except a few who are Ramanandis, Bharwads are followers of goddesses. Among the Bharwads of Central and South Gujarat, marriages are performed with little or no ceremony. A Brahman or a Darji, or in their absence, one of the members of the bride's family officiates at the marriage. Widow marriage is allowed. A younger brother of the deceased husband has the first claim on his brother's widow. Divorce is allowed. They burn the dead. The Rabaris claim to be Rajputs, who, instead of marrying Rajput women, married celestial damsels (*apsaras*) that is, perhaps, Charan women or daughters of god (*deviputris*) as they style themselves and were, therefore, called *Raha-Bahari*, that is going out of path. Their original home is said to be the Uttar Pradesh from which they moved to Marwad, and from there to Gujarat. They belong to Bijmargi, Ramanandi, and Pirana sects. Among them, all marriages take place on the same day. The Rabaris of one or more villages who wish to have their daughters married meet in a temple. A Brahman is called and he fixes the marriage day. Marriage among near relations is avoided. The dead are buried. *Shraddhas* are performed, with the help of a Brahman and caste people are feasted on the eleventh and twelfth day after death.

There are many castes, which consist of the Hindu craftsmen of the district. Among them Bhavsar, Chhipa, Darji, Ghanchi, Gola, Kansara, Khatri, Kumbhar, Luhar, Mochi, Salat, Soni, and Suthar are the main castes of craftsmen found in this district.



Rajputs were converted to Islam. In fact a chain reaction was started, a process which continued till the end of the Sultanate. They brought into being the Molesalam Girasiah community, one of the important land-owning communities in Gujarat. Their name is derived from Maula-Islam, meaning masters in Islam. They are mainly found in the Savli, Karjan, Dabhoi, Vaghodia and Sinor talukas of this district. They dine with other Muslims. Though they sometimes take meat, they are mostly vegetarians like the Hindus. A Molesalam will get his daughter married to a Shaikh, Saiyad, Mughal or Babi, but not, as a rule, with other Muslims who are inferior in social status. The son of a chief may get a Rajput girl in marriage; but other Molesalams marry either among their own people or the poorer classes of Muslims. They employ *kazis* or *maulvis*, but also maintain their own Brahman family priests and support Bhats and Charans. Some of them keep their names according to Hindus and Muslims both. In the matter of religion they are Sunni by faith.

The Maleks are converted Hindus. They are mainly found in Chhota Udepur, Dabhoi, Sinor, Sankheda, Jetpur-Pavi, Savli and Karjan talukas of this district. They are landlords, cultivators and servicemen. The Maleks are organised in *jamats* and its rules are strictly observed. The Maleks prefer to marry among near relatives, the girl being given outside only, if a suitable bridegroom is not available among them. The marriage calls are always initiated by the bridegroom's people by sending a *paigam* to the bride's people. This is confirmed usually by a gift of Rs. 5 from the former to the latter. Subsequently, gifts of eatables are sent to each other by both parties. In the matter of social customs they do not differ much from other converted Hindus. They are Sunnis by religion.

The Rajput origin of the Garaisas is indicated by their names which are still mostly Hindus. They are generally poor except those Rajput landowning families who are very well-off and constitute the upper class of the Muslims. They resemble the Maleks in their poverty and backwardness. They are mainly found in the Dabhoi, Vaghodia, Sankheda, Savli, Karjan and Sinor talukas of this district. In villages they are agriculturists and in towns, mill-workers and labourers. Less than a quarter of them were found to be literate. In the matter of social customs like birth, marriage and death they observe Muslim customs. They are Sunni by religion.

The Momnas from Momins (believers) are descendants of Hindus of many castes converted to the Shiah form of the faith by different members of the Ismailiya Saiyads, among whom Imamshah of Pirana was the most distinguished. They are mainly found in Karjan taluka of this district. They are mainly cotton weavers. They also sell cotton rope and tape. Both males and females have Hindu names. Among them circumcision is practised and dead are buried. Like Hindus, women wail and beat the



breast at deaths. Some of them put on Hindu dress while some have Muslim dress. Their women generally put on saree and *chaniya*. They speak Gujarati. Instead of the Quran, they read Imamshah's book of religious rules and also worship Hindu gods. There is a *durgah* of Naya Kaka Pir at the village Kukas of the Sinor taluka in this district where a fair is held regularly. This Naya Kaka was the disciple of Imamshah, who was the founder of the Pirana Sect.

Tais claim descent from Hatim Tai, but appear to be a mixed class of foreigners and converted Hindus. Weaving was their traditional occupation, but in recent times, they have taken to numerous other small trades. They are mainly found in the Dabhoi, Chhota Udepur, Sankheda and Jetpur-Pavi talukas of this district. They are distinct from other Muslims in following the Mehdavi tenets which were spread in Gujarat by Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri in the sixteenth century. Like Hindus, they form a separate *jamat*, with a headman of their own. In Vadodara, they have a *wada* of their own. Their special doctrinal beliefs have placed them in a special position among the Muslims of Gujarat. Their educational standards are not very high. In the matter of religion they are Shiah/Sunni by religion.

The Chhipas are mainly calico-printers. They are Hindu converts who follow their old occupation. They are found in Dabhoi, Vaghodia, Sankheda and Jetpur-Pavi talukas of this district. It is said that originally they came from Rajasthan. They put on Muslim dress. They keep marriage relations among their own community. They do not differ much from other Muslims in matter of social customs. They are Sunni by religion. In all their settlements, they have well-managed union or *jamat*, with a headman chosen by the members.

*Miscellaneous Muslim Communities*<sup>1</sup>—Among Muslims, particularly among converted Muslims, there are certain social groups, who, by their occupational pattern, developed compact characteristics and have social customs influenced by their counterparts among Hindus. Some of the leading occupational groups are narrated as under :

The term Fakir, means a mendicant. The traditional occupation of these people at one time was begging, but now a number of them have settled in the towns and rural areas. In villages they are cultivators and in towns they follow miscellaneous trades. They are mainly found in the Sinor, Chhota Udepur, Dabhoi, Vaghodia, Sankheda, Jetpur-Pavi, Savli, and Karjan talukas of this district. In matter of social customs like birth, marriage and death they follow Muslim customs while in religion they are Sunni by faith.

1. MISRA, S. C., *Muslim Communities in Gujarat*, 1963, pp. 69-77 and 103.

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